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ABSTRACT

The two mini reviews and two fact sheets contained in this collection synthesize basic information regarding four issues in rural education: special education, transportation, early childhood education, and reading achievement. Solutions to the special education problems of child identification, parent involvement, delivery of special education services, teacher training, and outside assistance are noted in one mini review. Additionally, addresses, contact persons, service areas, and samples of available materials from each of 16 Regional Resource Centers are presented. The second mini review is concerned with utilizing home-based education to provide good early childhood programs to rural areas faced with geographic isolation and limited facilities and finances. Six successful early childhood programs focusing on very young children, pre-kindergarten children, and handicapped children are detailed. A fact sheet concerning rural transportation systems addresses the most common types of rural school transportation, their uses, driver preparation, ownership and management options, and the effects of extended travel time on students. A second fact sheet addresses the characteristically poor reading achievement in rural areas and details seven successful reading projects, including three which have incorporated an individualized approach to improve rural student reading achievement. (SB)

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IMPORTANT ISSUES IN RURAL EDUCATION:
A COLLECTION OF ERIC/CRESS FACT SHEETS AND MINI REVIEWS

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RC 012241

PREFACE

In an effort to more readily meet the needs of its users, ERIC/CRESS (Educational Resources Information Center/Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools) contracted authors this year to produce the "fact sheets" and "mini reviews" included in this collection. Since ERIC/CRESS receives repeated requests for information on certain timely topics, it was determined that we might most efficiently answer such requests with pre-printed fact sheets and/or mini reviews. Accordingly, we prioritized our user requests and contracted authors to produce brief synthesis pieces dealing with early childhood education, special education, transportation systems, and reading achievement as pertaining to rural needs and rural education. These topics, then, are indicative of major concerns of the rural educators and others requesting information on rural education from ERIC/CRESS. Designed to aid the busy practitioner in accessing important information, these publications have now been collected in a single document for purposes of providing microfiche availability and announcement in Resources in Education, the ERIC monthly index to documents in the ERIC data base.

Since we are mandated both to retrieve and disseminate information pertinent to rural education, we solicit more detailed papers dealing with these and other rural education topics as well as topic suggestions for comparable fact sheets and mini reviews.

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Las Cruces, New Mexico 1980

ERIC/CRESS

RURAL EDUCATION

Mini Review

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS: THE PROBLEMS...AND SOME SOLUTIONS

In November of 1975, Congress enacted Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The stated purpose of the act was to "assure that all handicapped children have available to them . . . a free and appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs, to assure that the rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected, to assist States and localities to provide for the education of all handicapped children, and to assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate handicapped children."

The passage of Public Law 94-142 brought with it promises of education and opportunity previously denied to the rural handicapped child.

But before delivery of the quality of special education that the law mandates can occur, a number of problems must be overcome; these present a special challenge for the rural educator.

His concerns will be many. Even after the educator has located the handicapped children within his district, he must do more than just see to their education — he must educate the parents and community as well. Working with limited funds, he must deliver highly specialized services covering a wide range of handicapping conditions. He must recruit and retain personnel qualified in special education and see that they can receive additional training in their field. He must also know where to look for outside sources of assistance.

These problems all seemingly stem from such sources as geographic isolation and limitations in resources. The difficulties in overcoming them parallel the difficulties in providing human services in all rural areas.

Rural educators have risen to the challenge of delivering special education in isolated areas and are meeting the difficulties in a number of ways.

FINDING THE CHILDREN

Research has indicated that certain handicapping conditions such as mental retardation and learning disabilities have greater prevalence in geographic areas with poor prenatal care, reduced health care, and lower socio-economic levels. This is sometimes the case for certain rural areas. Furthermore, incidence rates suggest that up to 1.5 million children may be found in rural areas. Apparently the needs of some of these children are not being met, for a recent research report indicates that at least 5.3 percent of all rural school aged children are not enrolled in school. A major reason given for these children not being in school was attributed to handicapping conditions: either there was no special education available, or parents did not know about its availability. (Schrag)

While all states have instituted "child find" programs to locate handicapped children, their efforts in rural areas are hampered by isolation and sparsity. Because of a sense of shame or feeling of protectiveness, parents may sometimes hide their handicapped children and refuse to refer them to outside agencies, such as a school, for assistance. Among the creative strategies implemented have been visits by extension agents, house to house canvassing, information coupons in church bulletins, and sky writing. In a number of rural states the most effective strategy was that of personal contact. (Schrag)

INVOLVING THE PARENTS

Parents not only should be informed of the availability of special education, they also should understand what constitutes an effective special education program and what expectations are realistic for their handicapped children. Moreover, they should be able to influence decisions in the local district regarding special education programs. Parent groups should be organized to these ends.

Organization of this type of group may be difficult because poverty may inhibit parent participation, and distances may make it difficult to get parents together. Some parents may not be able to accept the fact that their child is handicapped. Often there is a lack of professionals available in rural areas to help organize this type of group.

When parents do organize, however, they can obtain very real benefits for both the school and the families involved. Interested, informed parents can represent their children's needs to local decision-making groups and so acquire additional services. They may be able to secure additional funds from outside sources. Parent groups also perform an important educational function, for within them parents may meet and share problems, learn about the programs of which their children are a part, and come to understand what constitutes effective special education.

DELIVERING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Children with unusual or very difficult educational problems may constitute a very small proportion of the total school population, yet their needs must still be addressed. Limited funds make it difficult to justify a special teacher and aide for only a few children. Availability of physical therapists, speech therapists, psychiatrists, occupational therapists and other personnel needed to provide related services to handicapped children is often limited, and such services are expensive when purchased through contractual agreements. A number of options are available in the delivery of special education and related services to small groups of handicapped children.

Regional Centers

Several states have turned to regional centers for more effective service delivery. Regionalization by several school districts can produce a wider range of specialized services, and, because larger numbers of students are served, substantial savings are gained in instructional costs. (Schrag) Regional centers are a widely utilized model for the delivery of vocational and educational services.

One such center is the Becker-Clay County Special Education Cooperative which spans eight school districts in five Minnesota counties and provides services for over 900 special needs students. Among the cooperative's more unique components is the career education center which provides secondary vocational exploration and training for students aged 14 to 21. Its curriculum includes skill training in such areas as food service, welding, wood shop, auto body, auto tune-up, gas station services, and photography. Another component, the Home and Social Living Project, prepares students to live independently. In the cooperative's child study component there are psychologists, a hearing coordinator, speech coordinator, special learning and behavior problems coordinator, school social worker, and home-bound, vision and school liaison persons. All are constantly traveling throughout the given area. (Anderson)

School cooperatives, multi-district units, and other regional programs, however, can be complicated by squabbles over location of the units or locus of decision-making control. Transportation costs may be very high, and students traveling to regional service units may ride a bus an hour and one-half a day or longer. (Schrag) This may be impossible for the more severely handicapped students and unacceptable to parents of young children.

To surmount the transportation problem, a regional center in Iron County, Utah boards the children from Monday through Friday and delivers them home for weekends. Many of the children at this center had previously been cared for in state institutions.

Service Delivery Within the Individual School

When regional services are not feasible, special education services must be provided by the individual schools. For the mildly handicapped in rural areas, "mainstreaming" has historically been the rule with children incorporated into regular classrooms as much as possible. One report considers rural isolation as in some ways a blessing in disguise, stating that "in many metropolitan areas problem children have been dumped into special education classes regardless of cause and degree of handicap." (Sher) The resulting labeling and segregating tended to stigmatize the special child.

Even if the child is placed into a regular classroom, he still must have special attention. A number of school districts utilize itinerant teachers to provide special instruction. Some teachers travel in vans equipped with all kinds of special education materials.

Itinerant teachers were the basic component of a research project conducted in ten rural Maine communities. Two teachers trained and experienced to work with the educable mentally retarded worked with the children at each school one day a week. In addition to giving specialized instruction to the children, they conferred with the regular classroom teachers to coordinate instruction and leave work for the other four days. Among the advantages noted were (1) the children were happier and better adjusted because they finally had work at a level at which they could be successful, and (2) the regular teachers received specific suggestions as to the types of lessons and teaching techniques appropriate for each child. Disadvantages included difficulty in maintaining programs from one week to another and problems in traveling in bad weather. This project is discussed at length in ERIC document No. ED 002 988.

PROVIDING INSERVICE TRAINING

"The teacher in day-to-day contact with exceptional children is the person who has almost total responsibility for providing adequate learning opportunities for the child and becomes the key to educational improvement. His background and preparation, his knowledge and effective use of resources and his skill are the avenues to better learning for the child." (Martinson)

Both special education and regular teachers in a small rural school may have to work with a wide variety of handicapped children over multiple age levels. Because preservice teacher programs may not provide training in all the roles necessary to implement the range of services required by federal legislation, inservice training is of critical importance. (Schrag) Funds under P.L. 94-142 may be used for critical inservice personnel training activities. Federal law also requires each state to include as part of its state plan a Comprehensive Development System for the development and training of preservice and inservice personnel in special and regular education and support areas.

Inservice training to teachers employed in rural areas is often offered through local institutions of higher learning. In northern Alabama, for instance, Jacksonville State University provided special education training to 727 teachers, administrators and educational diagnosticians during one school year. Included in the program were workshops, summer conferences and teacher exchange programs. In one program component special education teachers received exposure to classroom situations other than their own, thus en-

abling them to see other kinds of handicaps and the ways other teachers handled the education of them. (Frith)

Teacher Turnover

Inservice training may also be a partial solution to another problem confronting special education in rural areas — the high rate of teacher turnover. Idaho observed that in the period from 1968 through 1978 between 40 to 50 percent of the special education teachers employed in its rural school districts taught for one or two years and then left special education positions. A followup study indicated several consistent contributing factors: feelings of isolation, lack of continued professional development, lack of administrative support and low salary levels. (Schrag) Inservice training programs would address at least two of these factors. Idaho is not alone in this problem, for a number of other rural states have noted attrition rates ranging from 20 to 30 percent.

Another major obstacle rural officials face in recruiting and retaining personnel is the lower salaries offered. The average salary earned by rural teachers (including special education) is about 24% less than that of their metropolitan counterparts. In school districts with less than 50 pupils, the average salary is 47% less than those offered in larger school systems. (Schrag)

FINDING SOURCES OF OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE

Although the explicit requirements of P.L. 94-142 seemingly open a Pandora's box of concerns for the rural school official, outside help is available from a number of sources.

Federal Level

On the Federal level, the U.S. Bureau of Education for the Handicapped conducts training, analysis and resource coordinating activities that deliver more comprehensive services. (Schrag) Sixteen Regional Resource Centers provide training and technical assistance in the areas of educational assessment, psychological and related diagnosis, and non-discriminatory testing of minority group children, as well as in the development, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs of handicapped children. Among the topics addressed are the formulation of short-term and annual instructional objectives; specification of appropriate educational, supportive, and related services; development of placement strategies; use of curriculum methods and techniques; selection and utilization of instructional media, materials, and equipment; and selection of methods for student and Individual Education Programs (IEP) evaluation.

Ongoing efforts in one or all of the sixteen centers include:

Workshops, Conferences, Seminars
Demonstrations
Professional Consultation
IEP Needs Assessment
Direct Service to Children
Development of Training Products
Development of Demonstration Projects
Dessimination of Information on the IEP

Further information regarding the specific activities and services of each Regional Resource Center may be obtained by contacting the center. A map showing the areas served and a list of names and addresses of each center are appended.

State Level

Since the beginning of the 1970's, special education has grown to be the largest single category of state aid, excepting capital outlay. (Schrag) State departments of education are seeking to develop both communication and support systems for special education. Among the strategies implemented are state and regional conferences or workshops, summer special study institutes, on-site assistance, regional demonstration centers, and talent banks in which specific client needs can be matched with technical assistance skills.

Area Level

Colleges and universities also provide support for rural areas. In addition to inservice training programs, universities are an important resource of consulting and clinical services. Diagnostic teams may also access and prescribe appropriate treatment.

Local Level

Through coordination at the local level, additional programs and resources can be utilized. Title XX funds can provide a monitoring person to test what is taught and to access the student's ability to function independently. Supportive services available to both children and adults include counseling, transportation, employment service, diagnostic workups, and particular types of education. By working with the county welfare department, the rural school district can take advantage of these services. For example, in Missouri, where day care and transportation were two of the bigger problems of serving the handicapped, Title XX and Developmental Disabilities Act funds provided these activities as well as a number of others.

No single, easy answer or set of answers can be found for the problems of delivering special education in rural areas, for each school has its own unique set of circumstances. To deal with these circumstances, the educator can take these steps:

1. He must first conduct research to assess the special learning needs of all the children in the given geographic area.
2. He must establish what human resources he has available to meet the identified needs.
3. He must then determine what resources and services are still needed to enable the teachers and the school to provide optimum services to all the children with special needs. (Martinson)

REFERENCES AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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Annas, Philip P., et al, "Development of a Program for Mentally Retarded Children in Rural Schools." ED 002988.

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Oregon University, et al, "Implementing Special Education Services in Rural Remote Areas. The proceedings from the Western States Topical Conference (Salt Lake City, Utah, February 3-6, 1975). A Guidelines Document and Idea Resource for Educators, Parents; Concerned Citizens; Others." ED 103188.

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Sher, Jonathan P. and Rosenfeld, Stuart A., "Public Education in Sparsely Populated Areas of the United States." ED 141006.

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REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTERS

*NORTHWEST includes: Alaska, Hawaii, Samoa, Guam, Trust Territory

*SOUTHWEST includes: Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools

*SOUTHEAST includes: Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

Sample Materials Produced by Regional Resource Centers

Preschool Programs for Handicapped Children
Produced by: Regional Resource Center for Handicapped Children
University of Oregon

Recommended Procedures for the Entry and Retrieval of Appraisal and Prescriptive Programing Information In The National Instructional Materials Information System
Produced by: Coordinating Office for Regional Resource Centers
University of Kentucky, Lexington

Child Identification: A Handbook for Implementation
Produced by: Mid-East Regional Resource Center

Parents of the Handicapped in Partnership With Helping Professionals
Produced by: National Learning Resource Center of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Special and Compensatory Education

Supporting Activities for Prescriptive Programming
Produced by: New York Regional Resource Center
City University of New York

Education of Severely and Profoundly Handicapped Children and Youth
Produced by: Northeast Regional Resource Center

A Handbook: Development of Program Alternatives for Secondary Learning Disabled Students
Produced by: Ohio Regional Resource Center

The Illinois Regional Resource Center Diagnostic Teaching Model
Produced by: Illinois Regional Resource Center

Alternatives to Litigation: The Necessity for Parent Consultation
Produced by: Michigan Department of Education

Individualized Programming for the Severely Multiply Handicapped
Produced by: Texas Regional Resource Center

Vocational Education for the Handicapped: Resource Guide to Federal Regulations
Produced by: Texas Learning Resource Center

With Bias Toward None—A National Survey of Assessment Programs and Procedures
Produced by: Coordinating Office for Regional Resource Centers
University of Kentucky, Lexington

Non-biased Assessment of Minority Group Children
Produced by: Coordinating Office for Regional Resource Centers
University of Kentucky, Lexington

Career Education Materials
Produced by: Mid-West Area Learning Resource Center

Unbiased Assessment Guideline, Procedures and Forms for the Implementation of Public Law 94-142
Produced by: Southwest Regional Resource Center

The Secondary Resource Specialist in California: Promising Practices
Produced by: California Regional Resource Center

REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTERS

California Regional Resource Center
T. Bradford Sales, Acting Director
600 South Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 1304
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California 90005
(213) 381-5231
FTS: 798-4068
States Served: California

District of Columbia Regional Resource Center
Dr. Aaron Favors, Director
Howard University
2935 Upton Street, N.W.
Room 400 Holy Cross Building
Washington, D.C. 20008
(202) 686-6729
States Served: District of Columbia

Great Lakes Regional Resource Center
Dr. Lydia Beltran, Director
Michigan State Department of Education
Post Office Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909
(517) 373-0923
States Served: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana

Illinois Regional Resource Center
Sidney R. Miller, Program Director
Northern Illinois University
Graham Hall 243
DeKalb, Illinois 60115
(815) 753-0655 or 0657
States Served: Illinois

Mid-East Regional Resource Center
Dr. Raymond Cottrell, Director
George Washington University
1901 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 505
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 676-7200
FTS: 254-3700
States Served: Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia

Mid-South Regional Resource Center
Dr. Robert Sterrett, Director
University of Kentucky Research Foundation
131 Porter Building
Lexington, Kentucky 40506
(606) 258-4921
FTS: 355-2781
States Served: Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina

Midwest Regional Resource Center
Mr. Raymond Feltner, Director
Drake University
1332 26th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50311
(515) 271-3936
FTS: 862-4737
States Served: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas

New York City Regional Resource Center
Mr. Marton A. Hayott, Director
City University of New York/CASE
33 West 42nd Street
New York City, New York 10036
(212) 790-4408 or 4797
States Served: New York City only

New York State Regional Resource Center
Mr. Lee Cummings, Director
New York State Education Department
55 Elk Street, Room 117
Albany, New York 12234
(518) 474-2251
States Served: New York

Northeast Regional Resource Center
Dr. Nicholas Maldari, Director
New Jersey State Department of Education
168 Bank Street
Hightstown, New Jersey 08520
(609) 448-4773
FTS: 483-2311 or 2214
States Served: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey

Northwest Regional Resource Center
Dr. James Crosson, Director
1590 Willamette Street
Eugene, Oregon 97401
(503) 686-5641
FTS: 425-6564
States Served: Alaska, Hawaii, Samoa, Guam, Trust Territory, Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Wyoming

Ohio Regional Resource Center
Mr. Thomas Fisher, Director
Ohio State Department of Education
Division of Special Education
933 High Street
Worthington, Ohio 43085
(614) 466-2650
States Served: Ohio

National Learning Resource Center of Pennsylvania
Dr. James B. Duffey, Director
500 Valley Forge Plaza
1150 First Avenue
King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406
(215) 265-3706
States Served: Pennsylvania

Southeast Regional Resource Center
Dr. Faye Brown, Director
Auburn University at Montgomery
Montgomery, Alabama 36117
(205) 279-9110, Ext. 258
FTS: 534-7515
States Served: Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands*

Southwest Regional Resource Center
Dr. H Wayne Johnson, Director
University of Utah
2363 Foothill Drive, Suite G
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109
(801) 581-6281
FTS: 588-5151
States Served: Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools

Texas Learning Resource Center
Dr. James A. Tucker, Director
Texas Education Agency
201 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 475-1306
FTS: 734-5706
States Served: Texas

* Services not provided

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS IN RURAL SCHOOL AREAS

Rural school officials are concerned with transportation systems for their school districts in general or special education programs in particular. Concerns to be addressed include types of vehicles, uses of the system, purposes and preparation of drivers, ownership and management of the system, as well as effects of travel time on students.

TYPES OF VEHICLES

School buses, carryall vans and station wagons are the three main types of vehicles available for rural transportation systems. Depending on the number and needs of children (handicapped or not) and the geography of routes, one type of vehicle may have advantages over another.

The traditional school bus can transport large numbers of children, of course. It also can be outfitted for handicapped students. It is not as maneuverable, however, as other types of vehicles in restricted areas. But because the big yellow school bus is highly visible and easily recognizable as a school vehicle, its very use is a safety factor.

A carryall van can be utilized where the number of students to be transported does not warrent the use of a school bus. It, too, can be outfitted for the handicapped. It is maneuverable in restricted areas, but rather topheavy, a disadvantage in windy weather. Properly painted and outfitted with warning signs and devices, a van also can be recognized as a school vehicle.

Average fuel consumption will vary with each type of vehicle depending on the length of the route to be driven and the number of students to be transported. Pickup and delivery of a small to medium number of students is best handled by a station wagon or van. In this case, either vehicle will average better mileage per student than a school bus. On a field trip where a large number of students are to be transported, one school bus will average better mileage per student than three or four of the other two types and will require only one driver (3).

USES OF THE SYSTEM

Although the basic use of a school transportation system is transporting students to and from school, many other demands are put on the system. Another demand is transporting students on field trips. Not as common is transporting work/study students, as well as teachers who supervise them, to their places of work. Adults can be transported to adult or night education classes. Children, especially handicapped children, can be driven to clinics for regular checkups or shots. Parents who own only one or even no vehicle can be transported to and from school meetings or administrators can be driven to the homes of students and their parents for similar meetings (1).

PURPOSES AND PREPARATION OF DRIVERS

Drivers, who should be selected with caution, need pre-service training, orientation and periodic in-service training. Drivers can help with behavior modification and encourage the school attendance of students. They can serve as public relations agents with the community and parents. They also can serve as attendants, aides or secretaries.

Caution should be taken where teachers are used as drivers in order that it would not interfere with their normal obligations as instructors.

Substitute drivers should be trained in the same way as regular drivers (1).

OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SYSTEM

The decision for direct ownership, leasing, or contract of buses should be given careful study in those states where an option is legal. Direct ownership and management usually has several advantages. The cost is generally lower, consistency of service is better, and flexibility is greater in routing and in using vehicles for related purposes. The management can also plan for vehicle depreciation and arrange for replacement of worn-out vehicles. It can make arrangements for fuel and repairs. For example, with long, isolated routes, fueling points need to be provided for and emergency provisions for tires, batteries, etc, need to be available. Distances, road conditions, traffic load, desirable pickup points and knowledge of the area road layout are important pieces of information in case day-to-day changes are necessary. Driving extra miles is preferable to poor road conditions, a heavy traffic load, or poor pickup points (1).

EFFECTS OF TRAVEL TIME ON STUDENTS

When students must travel more than 60 minutes to school and then more than 60 minutes home, ill effects are likely to be noticed. Fatigue, caused by the long day for long-distance riders (about 11 hours vs. about 8 hours for town students) may discourage them from doing their homework assignments. Because of poor homework assignment grades, they may have low overall grade point averages. They may also be unable to participate in school activities because of fatigue and travel time. Less satisfaction with the school attended may be the result of the inability to participate in school activities. Aspiration also may be low with a majority of long-distance riders. Because of low aspiration, they may enroll in low-difficulty-level courses, drop out before graduation, and prefer working to going on to college if they do graduate. Fatigue, poor homework assignment grades, lower grade point averages, an inability to participate in school activities, less satisfaction with their school, and low aspiration are all likely to result, understandably, in a high percentage of absenteeism among long-distance riders (?).

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ERIC/CRESS

RURAL EDUCATION

Mini Review

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS: UTILIZING THE SCHOOL AND THE HOME FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

Again and again educators, psychologists, and other behavioral scientists stress the necessity of exposing very young children to a wide variety of learning experiences. Their studies have shown that "the early years of childhood have a paramount influence in determining the degree of competence that will be evidenced as an adult" (4, p. 1). Benjamin Bloom contends that one-third of all a person learns has been learned by the time he is six (3, p. 110); and he also maintains that one-half of an individual's general intelligence at age 18 has been developed by the time he is four years old (1, p. 13).

The first four to five years of a child's life are not only the period of most rapid growth in physical and mental characteristics, but also the time of greatest susceptability to environmental influences. Deprivation in these early years can be most dangerous in its effect. The child's ability to learn is enhanced by exposure to a wide variety of activities and to social and mental interactions with children and adults alike. Unfortunately, few homes provide enough of these opportunities (6, p. 74).

Traditionally, the way of meeting this need for early childhood education has been through nursery schools and public kindergartens. Such schools, however, have generally been limited to urban and suburban areas; and many young children in rural areas — possibly those children in greatest need — have had no adequate program of preschool education.

Small, isolated schools may not have the funds, facilities, or properly trained teachers for a conventional kindergarten program. Even assuming there are enough young children in the area to conduct a kindergarten class, incorporating them into a traditional classroom situation might subject them to too long a day or too long a bus trip (1, p. 1). More importantly, however, the traditional design does not include three to four year old children and so deprives them of the kind of instruction they need to be adequately prepared to enter the first grade (2, pp. 3-4).

One alternative to formalized classroom instruction is the use of home-based models for early education; these have been shown to be both practical and productive. Their use is particularly suitable to rural areas for a number of reasons: the home is a site that is readily available — no extra space is required. The rural family unit is particularly strong. Parents do want to help their children learn and can be taught to be effective teachers (4, p. 3).

Programs That Work

In a number of rural areas in the United States, educators have instituted programs that featured home-based instruction for preschool children. The remainder of this report will take a closer look at some of these programs. Because all of the projects are described in documents already within the ERIC system, additional information is readily available through ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS).

One booklet might be of particular interest: *Early Childhood Education: Promising Practices in Rural Areas* by Nora Lehnhoff and others (ED 118 288). Published by the Rural Education Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in cooperation with the National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Education, the book describes twelve programs judged to be particularly beneficial.

The basic criteria for their inclusion in the book were:

1. The program is designed to overcome the limitations of small size and remoteness.
2. The program is designed to use the resources of the rural environment and to take advantage of the unique characteristics of rural communities.
3. The program is designed to promote growth and development in young children rather than being custodial.
4. Evidence exists that program activities are related to a rationale or philosophy regarding growth and development.

Many of the practices described in the book utilized funds provided by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I or III (4, pp. 4-5).

The following five programs are among those discussed in the Lehnhoff booklet. They cover the spectrum from infant to handicapped to pre-kindergarten education and are representatives of some of the alternatives available for consideration.

ERIC® CLEARINGHOUSE ON RURAL EDUCATION and SMALL SCHOOLS

Education in the Earliest Years:

The Infant Education Project - Weber State College

"An expanding body of research is pointing to the infancy period as the time when the child's self-concept, curiosity and feelings about the world take root" (4, p. 103). Relatively few preschool programs focus on the parent-child relationship during the early years of the child's development.

One program that did provide such a focus was the Weber State Infant Education Program, which sought to provide parents of children newborn to three years of age with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to give their children the foundations for learning. In addition to developing appropriate curriculum materials and strategies for parent instruction, the project also studied the effects of the curriculum on the children's development and on their parent's knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Between 8 to 24 hours following the delivery of their babies, mothers were contacted by an Infant Educator who acquainted them with the program and explained the development and learning capacities of the newborn child.

When the baby was two weeks old, parents were contacted again at home to set up an appointment for a home visit. Later, at the home visit, the Infant Educator presented curriculum material for infants of specific age groups.

During the child's first year, parents could attend three workshops, each geared to specific age groups (six months, one year, etc.); and, in this way, parents and educators worked together toward the most complete development of each child (4, pp. 103-107).

The Toy Lending Library
Early Childhood Education Program, Murray, Utah

For 1½ hours each week over a period of eight weeks, children between the ages of two and five, along with their parents, attended special classes at the Toy Lending Library of Murray School District.

For the children there were instructional activities that included verbal language development, concept perception in time, space and number usage, creative art and music, and orientation to small group situations.

For the parents there were discussions in child development that explored social development, fears and anxieties, communication skills, emotional health, and such specific concerns as thumbsucking, toilet training, sibling rivalry, etc. Role play activities, filmstrips, and tapes were also utilized.

Games and toys emphasizing creative instructional activities were checked out to the parents along with special toy bags to carry the materials back and forth for the course.

The staff for the program was composed of two teachers with backgrounds in early childhood development and a certified kindergarten teacher assisted by two aides.

Although initially extended to all parents and preschoolers in the school district, the program later came into Title I funding which limited participation to those who qualified under certain eligibility requirements such as a minority, low income, learning or physical handicap, etc. (4, pp. 15-20).

Early Learning Program; Platte Canyon School District No. 1; Bailey, Colorado

Three centers, located at a church, a private home, and a summer camp, provided a base for one-morning-a-week instruction for area children under 3½ years old. Each session was limited to 12 children and their parents.

A specially outfitted van transported the teaching staff, equipment, and materials to be used for the Early Learning Program as well as a lending library of toys, learning games, and parent education books.

The project gave the children learning experiences in a non-school setting and sought to develop their cognitive, social, and communication skills.

The program for the parents included presentations on such topics as the developmental stages of children, sex education, how children learn, etc.

At one portion of each session the two groups came together, and as parents observed their children at work, they received instruction from the early childhood specialist on ways to extend learning at home. Children were allowed to take home the materials used during these lessons for later use with their parents.

The program was initially funded through ESEA Title III and NDEA (4, pp. 71-76).

Education for the Handicapped

Project Telepac -
Utah State University, Logan, Utah

"A major problem in teaching or helping the handicapped homebound child in rural areas is the lack of specialized facilities" (4, p. 35). While the population in urban areas is often large enough to support centralized facilities for services to the handicapped, few rural areas can offer such assistance.

Aiming at the need to assist handicapped children of rural areas, Telepac's basic design was that of a service delivery model based on parental cooperation, use of the telephone, and instructional packets. Its curriculum was developed to provide parents with a set of procedures for training their severely handicapped children in the home.

Each of the 22 instructional packages introduced and gave teaching methods for specific academic skills, self-help skills, or leisure time activities. Parent involvement packages provided materials relating to arithmetic, language arts, self-help skills, and recreation.

By using toll-free WATS lines, the parents had direct contact with supportive services. Additional materials available at no charge included "how to" books and pamphlets as well as a collection of multimedia materials.

Where possible, a local program monitor in the rural community kept track of the individual's progress.

Serving as a base for program administration, development and service, was the Homebound Handicapped Resource Center, located at the Exceptional Child Center at Utah State University (4, pp. 35-39).

Prekindergarten Education

Kindergarten Readiness Packet - Grass Valley, Oregon

Most of the parents in Sherman County, Oregon had adequate educational experiences, but were often hesitant to prepare their children for their first school experience. Some parents lacked ideas or the necessary materials; others feared they might teach the wrong way.

To address this need, Grass Valley school district assembled Kindergarten Readiness Packets which were designed to teach four and five year olds the skills that would give them a successful kindergarten experience. The focus of the packet was on enhancing a child's awareness of the surrounding world, practicing his auditory memory skills, and giving him practice in writing letters and numerals.

Mothers of preschool children throughout Sherman County were invited to the Grass Valley grade school where they were given the packet and had its use explained to them. Kindergarten students for the next year also received packets at this time.

The materials distributed included:

1. A brief letter of introduction
2. A list of general and physical characteristics the child should acquire before or shortly after school entry. (The list was taken from *Teach Your Child to Talk: A Parent Handbook.)*
3. Auditory memory training excercises, including nursery rhymes, songs, singing games, and finger plays
4. Coloring charts to help the child learn shapes and colors
5. Mimeographed pages showing correct letter formation of the upper and lower case alphabet and of numbers zero through nine
6. Houghton Mifflin's booklet "Your Child and Reading--How You Can Help"
7. Games for children, dot to dots, coloring pages
8. Copies of Scolastic Magazine's "Let's Find Out"

The packet was designed for rural Middle America, an area that is not disadvantaged and is populated by stable families with normal, active children. Parents from such families can and usually do provide their children with many enriching experiences when given encouragement, suggestions, and a few materials and other resources. These parents simply need to know they *can* teach their children (4, pp 41-45).

Tremendous variations exist between communities, and a program that works beautifully in one area may be unacceptable for use in another. As Lehnhoff states, "It is important to determine which elements of the program will fit the unique needs and characteristics of each community. In order to work most effectively, these programs should be tailored to the needs and concerns of all persons involved" (4, p.4).

The Appalachia Preschool Education Program

A particularly unique example of tailoring an effort to meet the needs and concerns of a specific area is offered by the Appalachian Preschool Education Program. Indeed, the Applachian region has been called "a national laboratory to examine and promote alternative systems and modalities to meet the needs of children and their families" (5, p.36). Much of this designation undoubtedly stems from the efforts of the Appalachian Educational Laboratory in Charleston, West Virginia, which is committed to "provide quality education in Appalachia through extensive use of modern technology, new instructional media, and mobile educational facilities with the cooperative efforts of local school systems, state departments of education, and colleges and universities" (1, p.ix).

Poverty, cultural deprivation, isolation and the absence of adequate preschool education programs have produced particularly debilitating effects on the school performance of many Appalachian youngsters. Such children "have been doomed to a lifelong separation from opportunities the outside world of America increasingly values as the inherent right of every child" (2, p.2).

Two factors--the persisting cultural deprivation of Appalachia and the importance of early years to later development--prompted the Appalachia Educational Laboratory to choose the Preschool Education Program as a priority endeavor.

Capitalizing on the fact that over 90 percent of the homes in the region had a television set, the Lab developed a home-oriented program that would be delivered by means of television broadcasts, home visitations, and a mobile classroom.

"Around the Bend," the television element of the project, consisted of a 30-minute broadcast aired five days a week during the regular school year. An on-camera teacher--Patty Hughes--was presented as a friend who invited the children into her home where she talked to them about things of interest to young children. The usual preschool activities presented included concepts like large and small, same and different, classification, numbers, letters, rhythmic work, body movement, textures, etc. Film shot on location allowed Patty and the children to visit such places as an airport or library.

The key component of the program was the home visitors, all eight of whom were recruited from the area in which they were to work. Three weeks of intensive

training in child development, teaching techniques, interviewing procedures, and sensitivity training prepared these paraprofessionals for their new duties.

Their work related directly to the television broadcast, for during the weekly visits to a home each visitor explained the theme of the coming week's episodes and told the mother what items the child would need to participate. These might be household items such as buttons or acorns to count, or the home visitor might deliver an item, such as finger paints.

In addition, the home visitor provided suggestions for games or activities designed to complement the TV sessions and intended for use at any time during the week. The weekly visits also provided strong motivation for the mother to maintain her interest in the child and to follow through on activities.

The final component of the program was the mobile classroom, designed specifically for the project, which was an 8 by 22-foot box mounted on a truck. Inside, the facility was fully carpeted, heated and air conditioned, and equipped with a water supply, cooking area, and chemical toilet. The furniture was child size, the room was colorfully decorated, and the training materials ranged from an audio visual unit, bulletin board, book shelves, and books, toys, and games galore.

Each week this mobile classroom visited 10 locations where groups of children visited it for 1½ hours to participate in both individual and group activities geared toward the same objectives presented by the other two elements of the program for the week.

After two years of program operation, research evaluating the effectiveness of the operation showed the home visits to be the most crucial part of the program in promoting cognitive growth. In her work with both mother and child, the visitor had not only encouraged the child's participation in the program activities, but also influenced the mother, thus changing the reinforcement contingencies toward more learning experiences in the home.

The television program in itself provided the substance for cognitive and affective learning and the mobile classroom enhanced the social skills necessary for the child's personal development and his learning in group situations (2, p.20).

As with the other programs described in this report, space limitations do not permit a more detailed description of this project. However, more information about it can be obtained from the following ERIC documents:

ED 052 865 - "The Appalachia Preschool Education Program: A Home-Oriented Approach," Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, W. Va. December, 1970

ED 063 992 - "Teaching Mathematical Concepts to Rural Preschool Children Through a Home Oriented Program," Roy W. Alford, Jr., Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, W. Va. June, 1970

ED 124 303 - "Social and Education Characteristics of the Families of Appalachian Preschool Children as a Basis for Home-Based Education," Bertram, Charles L., and others, Appalachia Educational Lab. April, 1976

ED 127 028 "Social and Educational Characteristics of the Families of Rural Appalachian Preschool Children," Bertram, Charles L., Appalachia Educational Lab. November, 1975

ED 143 461 - "The Use of Television in Pre-school Education in Sparsely Populated Areas," Schleicher, K., Council of Europe, Strasbourg (France). Committee for General and Technical Education. May, 1977

Despite the barriers of geographic isolation, limited facilities, and even more limited funds, it is possible to deliver early childhood education in rural areas. When such programs combine the resources and expertise of the educational systems with the security and strength of the home, the young rural child can truly receive the best of both worlds.

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Prepared by D. D. Seager

READING ACHIEVEMENT IN RURAL AREAS

THE READING ACHIEVEMENT OF RURAL STUDENTS

Health, Education and Welfare Department statistics indicate that at least one million United States teenagers (aged 12 to 17) cannot read at the beginning fourth grade-level. They cannot follow simple written instructions, cannot follow a television schedule, and certainly cannot draw inferences from a newspaper article. In our print-oriented society they are truly at a disadvantage.

In 1975, the National Assessment of Educational Progress noted a correlation between reading proficiency and several variables, significantly including the individual's community. Only in extreme inner city schools are students more likely to have reading difficulties than in extreme rural and small schools, where performance levels in reading skills were consistently below national averages in 1975.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO POOR READING ACHIEVEMENT?

In many ways the rural child may be at a disadvantage from the outset. Life in Appalachia and extreme rural areas is often characterized by a social and economic harshness which contributes to fundamental learning problems in all disciplines. Economic and seasonal demands may prevent the student from attending school at all, thus depriving him of what may the the only available source of academic and intellectual stimulation. Far from being confined to extreme rural areas, such geographic and cultural isolation is also common in less remote regions. Although the presence of the mass media can greatly soften the effects of isolation on the student, it cannot completely erase them.

This is because most educational materials reflect middle class environments, values, and priorities often unfamiliar to these students. Among these priorities is standard English. Of course, many rural students do speak standard English, but many do not. As success in learning to read is directly related to an individual's language structures, the non-standard speaker is at a great disadvantage. In those areas in which most parents do not have a high school education and little value or emphasis is placed on verbalization, children may be unfamiliar with standard English as an oral system and will therefore have difficulty learning to read printed matter.

HOW READING ACHIEVEMENT CAN BE IMPROVED

While research regarding reading achievement in rural areas is somewhat sparse, some programs have been found effective in improving the reading skills proficiency of rural students. In Appalachian Tennessee, the successful Upper Cumberland Reading Project, funded in 1971 through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title III, improved student reading achievement while dealing with the lack of local physical and financial resources. The 3-year teacher exchange program used no new or dramatic approaches to reading instruction, but rather trained teachers in exemplary teaching and classroom practices. The teachers successfully applied their new-learned methods to existing basal reading programs, usually inadequate in such settings. The percentage of project pupils reading at grade level nearly tripled in two years.

In an Ohio project begun in 1974, a large van belonging to the Ohio University Teacher Corps Project is stocked with instruction materials, audiovisual equipment and diagnostic instruments. A staff of reading interns travels in the van throughout a specific district providing diagnostic and remedial services to district children and developing individualized instructional plans for each student. This service is particularly important in geographically isolated regions served by older school buildings with no facilities to spare for reading specialists.

INDIVIDUALIZATION BREEDS IMPROVEMENT

There is some thought that ungraded academic situations, at least at the primary level, may foster improved reading readiness and achievement in rural students, but there is greater evidence of the success of individualized reading instruction. An individualized reading program allows the student to progress at his own pace, using largely self-selected materials. Such organization allows the introduction of culturally relevant and familiar materials, thus raising the student's interest level. Individualized programs are also more tolerant of seasonal absences than more rigid lockstep programs. One individualized summer reading program for rural youth resulted in improvement of as much as two mean grade levels during the summer, as well as improved student attitudes towards school, reading, and self.

RURAL EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS IN READING (from "Educational Programs that Work", 6th ed., National Diffusion network).

Three exemplary rural reading programs which employ an individualized approach are:

1. Basic Skills in Reading (BASK)

   Designed to provide students in grades 1-6 with special instruction in the basic skills necessary for reading success, BASK is essentially a remedial reading program. It is a pull-out project, using a criterion-referenced format and including individualized diagnosis, prescription, and instruction. Based on past statistics, about 80% of students in the BASK program can be expected to make gains of one month's growth in reading per month. The project is designed for computer or manual record-keeping and data processing.

Contact: Marjorie H. Benz, Title I Coordinator
Manchester Public Schools
Amoskeag School, 121 Front Street
Manchester, New Hampshire 03102

2. Computer-Assisted-Diagnosis-Prescriptive Program in Reading and Mathematics (CADPP)
This supplemental remedial program for use in grades 3-9 (reading) and 3-7 (mathmatics) has three components: a diagnostic approach to individualized instruction; a learning center approach to classroom management; and an individual prescriptive approach to instruction in areas of need. The use of a computer to diagnose and develop individualized plans and maintain student progress records frees the teacher for more instruction. In addition, the computer matches individual student needs with available learning materials, thus providing the teacher with technical assistance. Extensive staff development and training are required.
Contact: Debra J. Glowinski, Federal Programs Director
Title I Office
Box 292
Dillwyn, Virginia 23936

3. Reading/English Rotation Project
In this team teaching approach to reading instruction for grades 6-9, students are divided into small flexible groups which move from station to station. The stations are arranged in three classrooms. The first is equipped as a reading laboratory to emphasize basic skills; the second is used to reinforce and provide sequential development of reading skills; the third is also used for reinforcement with English/reading skill exercises and using the language experience approach. Different materials at each station are specifically planned to build a success pattern for the individual child. Excluding personnel (three teachers and four paraprofessionals per rotation and/or sixty students), the cost of this program is just $15 per student. Materials already found in most schools are used. Over nine years, participants have averaged one month's growth in reading per month in instruction.
Contact: Marcelyn Hobbs, Program Director
Reading/English Rotation Project
Norris School
McDuffie County Schools
Thomson, Georgia 30824

Other exemplary programs in reading include:
MARC: The Multisensory Approach to Reading and Reading Readiness Curriculum
MARC is a K-1 reading program specifically for students from low-income families in rural areas. Students are grouped for instruction based on continuous diagnosis and are taught through a combination of activities designed to use all the learning modalities. Using a classroom or remedial lab, any teacher can implement the program which produces significantly higher reading readiness and reading scores.
Contact: Annie Ruth Perryman, Director
Project MARC
P.O. Box 93
Crawfordville, Florida 32327

Learning to Read by Reading
This method of teaching reading to sub-par achievers at upper-elementary through junior college levels has been cited by the National Right to Read Effort as one of thirteen exemplary reading programs. It is a multi-media system especially applicable to non-readers and those students reading below the 3.0 grade level. Students use a combination of cued and uncued readers, workbooks, and "read-along" materials to learn symbol-sound relationships and conventional rules of phonics as they progress to regular reading. Teacher training is important to the project which has had excellent results. One project group gained 2.2 years in just 12 weeks of half-day instruction.

Contact: Philip K. Glossa, Director
18 N. Banner Drive
Sonora, California 95370

or: Orval S. Hillman, Director
Reading Learning Center
P.O. Box 497
Jamestown, California 95327

MORE INFORMATION
Right to Read is a national effort for developing and improving reading skills of all citizens. It is a multi-faceted program of literacy needs assessment; financial assistance to local education and non-profit organizations to meet those needs; information dissemination; and technical assistance in program development and implementation. For more information,
write to: Right to Read
Office of Education
Donohoe Building, Room 1167
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

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